POLITICAL FEATURE NO. 1-1601 OCTOBER 7, 1976
RAY KABAKER

SISCO-SUNDQUIST COMMENTS ON DEBATE
(TAPE INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

EDITORS: FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM VOA'S PRESS CONFERENCE USA PANEL DISCUSSION WITH JOSEPH SISCO, PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (SINCE JULY) AND FORMER DIPLOMAT AND UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, AND JAMES SUNDQUIST, A SENIOR FELLOW OF THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION SPECIALIZING IN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS.

ON THE QUESTION OF PRESIDENT FORD'S REMARK CONCERNING SOVIET DOMINATION OF EASTERN EUROPE:

SISCO: MY OWN JUDGEMENT WOULD BE THAT HE PROBABLY INTENDED TO PROJECT THE VIEW THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT ACCEPT THE DOMINANCE OF EASTERN EUROPE BY THE SOVIET UNION. I THINK HE WAS TRYING TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION THAT WE HAVE DRAWN SOME LINE. I THINK THE OBVIOUS FACT IS THAT THE SOVIET UNION IN EASTERN EUROPE OBVIOUSLY INFLUENCES ITS ENTIRE SPHERE. BUT I THINK IT'S MORE IN TERMS OF WHETHER OUR ATTITUDE AND OUR ACCEPTANCE OF THAT IS ANYTHING THAT IS FINAL.

-0-

ON THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE DEBATE AS A FOREIGN POLICY EXERCISE:

SISCO: WHEN YOU REALLY LOOK IN THE BROADEST SENSE AT WHAT WAS SAID BY THE TWO CANDIDATES, HERE WERE TWO CANDIDATES WHO WERE TALKING ABOUT CONTINUING INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT. HERE WERE TWO CANDIDATES WHO WERE TALKING ABOUT CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR NATO ALLIES, PERHAPS ARGUING ABOUT HOW ONE OUGHT TO PROCEED WITH OUR ALLIES, BUT NEVERTHELESS THAT BASIC ASSUMPTION BEING THE CONTINUING RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR ALLIES; AN ARGUMENT AS TO WHETHER THERE WAS OR WAS NOT RECIPROCITY IN OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, BUT BOTH OBVIOUSLY MAKING THE BASIC ASSUMPTION THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION HAVE TO

BE CONTINUED. (OPT) AND I COULD GO ON, AND THE REASON WHY I UNDERSCORE THIS POINT IS THAT, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF OUR OVERSEAS AUDIENCES, HERE WERE TWO CANDIDATES TALKING WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE UNITED STATES CONTINUING TO HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS, THE UNITED STATES CONTINUING TO INVOLVE ITSELF IN A POSITION OF LEADERSHIP, AND THE ARGUMENT BEING PRIMARILY -- NOT ENTIRELY, BUT PRIMARILY -- ON THE QUESTION OF MEANS.(END OPT)

-0-

ON THE RELEVANCE OF FOREIGN POLICY IN THE CAMPAIGNING:

SUNDQUIST: IN TERMS OF THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, FOREIGN POLICY HAS NOT BEEN MUCH OF AN ISSUE. I SAW RESPONSES TO A QUESTION THE OTHER DAY -- "WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FACING THE COUNTRY? --" AND 95 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE HAD AN OPINION ON THAT. IN THE 95 PERCENT OF RESPONSES THERE WAS NOT A SINGLE REFERENCE TO FOREIGN POLICY; THAT WAS DOWN SOMEWHERE IN THE 5 PERCENT 'OTHER.' BUT THERE IS SOME UNEASINESS IN THE COUNTRY ABOUT DETENTE, A FEELING THAT SEEMS TO BE FAIRLY WIDESPREAD, THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE SOMEHOW GETTING MORE OUT OF IT THAN WE ARE, AND CARTER WAS EVIDENTLY TRYING TO EXPLOIT THAT FEELING. RONALD REAGAN HAD BUILT IT UP DURING THE PRIMARY CAMPAIGN. SO HE WAS ATTEMPTING TO SHOW THAT WE HAD BEEN A LITTLE WEAK, AND WE WEREN'T GETTING AS MANY CONCESSIONS AS WE WERE GIVING AWAY. IT'S HARD TO SAY WHETHER HE SCORED ANY DEBATOR'S POINTS ON THAT, BUT AT LEAST HE GAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT HE WAS TOUGH AND WOULD BE A HARD BARGAINER. BUT IN TERMS OF THE OBJECTIVE OF DETENTE, I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ANY TURNING AWAY FROM IT.

-0-

ON THE QUESTION OF INTERNAL UNITY IN THE SHAPING OF FOREIGN POLICY:

SUNDQUIST: IN ORDER TO HAVE A CONSTANT POSITION IN WORLD AFFAIRS, THE SENATE, THE HOUSE AND THE PRESIDENT HAVE TO BE BROUGHT TOGETHER, AND THIS IS A PROBLEM IN OUR PECULIAR INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM. CARTER HAS AN ADVANTAGE ON THAT SCORE THAT I THINK HE FAILED TO EXPLOIT IN EITHER DEBATE, AS FAR AS THAT GOES. AND THAT IS THAT, AS A DEMOCRAT AND WITH A CERTAIN DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS, HE WOULD PRESUMABLY BE ABLE TO GET STRONGER SUPPORT AND SPEAK WITH A FIRMER ASSURANCE THAN PRESIDENT FORD HAS BEEN ABLE TO. THERE ISN'T ANY QUESTION THAT CONGRESS WILL BE DEMOCRATIC. NEVERTHELESS, I GUESS THAT PEOPLE DON'T CARE MUCH ABOUT THAT; THEY'RE LOOKING AT THE INDIVIDUAL AND NOT THE PARTY SYSTEM.

-0-

ON THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN THE DEBATE FORMAT:

SUNDQUIST: WELL THE SUGGESTION THAT HAS BEEN MADE THAT APPEALS TO ME, IT WOULD INTRODUCE AN ELEMENT OF RISK INTO THE SITUATION, WOULD BE TO HAVE THEM CONFRONT AND QUESTION EACH OTHER, RATHER THAN HAVING A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE. I SUPPOSE MY BASIC RESERVATION ABOUT THE DEBATE IS THAT IT IS TOO IMPORTANT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. HOW A MAN HANDLES HIMSELF IN A DEBATE AND GIVING A THREE-MINUTE ANSWER TO A QUESTION HAS SO LITTLE TO DO REALLY WITH WHETHER HE'S QUALIFIED TO RUN THE COUNTRY, HOW HE CHOOSES ADVISORS, WHAT HIS FUNDAMENTAL APPROACHES ARE, HOW GOOD AN ADMINISTRATOR HE IS, AND ALL THE REST OF IT. BUT THAT'S TRUE IN CAMPAIGNING IN GENERAL. THE TRAITS REQUIRED TO WIN A CAMPAIGN ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE TRAITS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO BE A GOOD PRESIDENT.

-0-

SISCO: WELL I WOULD AGREE WITH THAT, AND I WOULD HOPE THAT THERE COULD BE SOME ALTERING OF THE FORMAT SO THAT THERE WOULD BE A REAL EXCHANGE. THERE ARE CERTAIN RISKS, BUT I THINK THE AMERICAN PUBLIC WOULD HAVE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO SEE ANOTHER DIMENSION IN THE TWO INDIVIDUALS IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES.

RK/PBM